



WHY EVENTS FAIL!

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Why do people attend festivals and events?

What kinds of factors may prevent people from attending events?

Why do events fail?

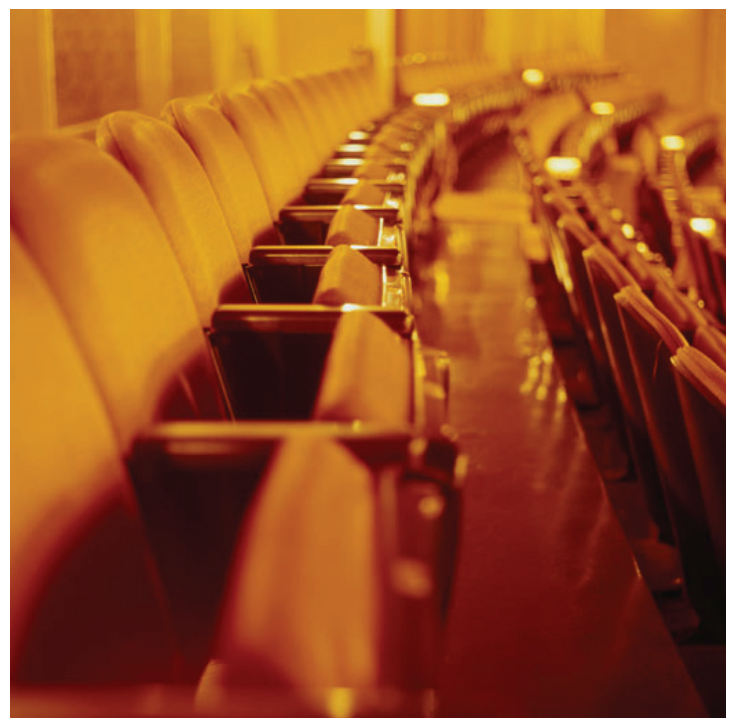
People attend festivals and special events for a number of reasons, all of which can be categorized together as ways to do something 'out of the ordinary' from the participants regular day to day lives, or as Getz (1991) cited by Getz and Cheyne (p136) states 'for leisure, social or cultural experiences outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experiences.' Regardless of the reasons that the community hosting the event may cite as their motivations for holding the event or indeed the theme or title given to the event, the motivations of attendees remain remarkably similar (although their expectations of the event may vary). A recent study by special event and festivals anthropologists, Getz and Cheyne suggests that 'time, cost, social factors and life interest' as motivators for people to attend events as well as how events fit into social and travel plans as well as who else in their friends and social circle were attending.' Another study by events anthropologists Kim, Uysal & Chen (2002) cite several recent studies into event attendance motivation that support Getz and Cheyne's claims. The commonly occurring motivators in the studies cited by Kim et.al are: escape, excitement, novelty, socialization, and family togetherness.

However, not all of the motivations will apply to all people. As Dimmock and Tiyce state (p363) 'Different people will be attracted to a festival in order to satisfy different personal needs.' Getz and Cheyne argue that events satisfy attendee's needs on all levels when applied to Maslow hierarchy of needs. Getz and Cheyne (p140) state that '...events of all kinds appear to motivate people, or satisfy them, on different levels: basic physical needs ... interpersonal or social needs... and personal needs.' Depending on the events ability to address the attendee's needs different events will therefore offer different "push" or "escape" factors that drive attendance according to Getz and Cheyne. (p141) This would suggest that while there are many motivating factors for people to attend events, they can be addressed on one level as to meet physical, social or personal needs and on another level to address needs of escape, excitement, novelty, socialization, and family togetherness. However, not all of these needs will be met in all people at by all events; rather different patrons will attend of different reasons or a combination of these reasons.

A recent study by Milner, Jago & Deery gives some insight into why people do not attend festivals and events. They show that the common reasons for non attendance from their own study are similar to studies conducted by The Australia Council and by Arts Victoria. The common reasons are; 1) not interested; 2) cost; 3) no time; 4) travel time/access to festivals or events 5) children either too old or too young to attend as

a family unit and importantly age and health related issues. The study by Milner et.al found that 'older people were much more likely to be non attendees' (p145) and that this demographic were represented highly in all areas of reasons given for non attendance. This led them to conclude that the stage in family life cycle was an important factor in determining attendance. However their study and the ones conducted by The Australia Council and Arts Victoria both found that 'Lack of interest (was) the single largest open ended response given by non attendees' and went on to note that this was the type of variable which event organizers have the most control.

The inability to produce a festival or event that stimulated enough interest in potential attendees is interestingly not given as a major reason from the study by Getz into the reasons why festivals fail. This may be explained by the fact that Getz's information was gained by interviewing festival and event organizers who saw external reasons for failure rather than the festival or event just not being interesting enough to attract attendees. This perhaps shows an oversight on the part of festival and event organizers to compare the available statistics regarding nonattendance and reasons for failure.



Getz's study revealed that event organizers commonly saw general categories such as 'the weather, lack of corporate sponsorship, over reliance on one source of money; inadequate marketing or promotion; and a lack of advance strategic planning' as the key reasons for event failure.

I would suggest that this shows that events fail for as many and as varying reasons as why they would succeed and as many and varied reasons as to why people attend. The role of the festival and event organizer must be to take into account all of these factors and not to place too high an importance on any one or the other. Therefore the role is one of providing constant balance between conflicting forces and activities.

References:

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